

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF TURKEY

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Foreign Section Editors :

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Editorial

Now that the first annual general meeting has been held, and with the forthcoming publication of the first annual report, the Ornithological Society of Turkey (Foreign Section) can truly claim to have been launched. It is therefore appropriate to try and set out the various aims of the Society and to establish priorities between them.

It is important to bear in mind that a Society such as this must take a long view, and the committee has no hesitation in stating that the most important objective of the Society is to help train and encourage a body of keen and informed observers in Turkey. Unless such a body comes into being, it will be almost impossible to achieve an effective conservation policy. What the society can do is strictly governed by the funds available, but we hope to be able to bring over at least one of our Turkish friends each year to study for a time in the various institutes in Great Britain and Europe. The first of these visits is taking place this June. Various other measures to help achieve this objective are under investigation at the moment.

After this comes the collection of data. Turkey is an enormous country with a wide and varied range of birds, and past information is limited. We hope to build up a large amount of information during the next few years, which will be available to help form sound conservation policies. The annual report will be most important in this connection.

Finally, we would like to be able to sponsor projects to research into specific problems, particularly on a joint Turkish-foreign basis. At the moment, with our present financial situation, it would be unrealistic to expect to be able to do this in the immediate future.

These objectives are not easy to attain, but we hope to progress steadily towards them. In particular we hope to achieve a broad international approach, and in this connection are fortunate in having Vice-Presidents and Council members from a number of different countries ready to help. Organisation and communications pose problems, but we are

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confident that given time and energy we shall deal with these successfully.

The officers of the Society as elected in December 1968 are:-

Foreign Section

Vice-Presidents: Sir Hugh Elliott, R.D. Etchecopar, Dr. L. Hoffmann, Dr. C. Kosswig.

Chairman: W.H.N. Wilkinson.

Secretary: R.F. Porter

Treasurer & Membership Secretary: J.P. Knowles

Committee Members: J.C. Beaudoin, H.H. Hoekstra, G. Muller, Dr. J. Szijj, J. Vielliard, A. Vittery and Tansu Gulpinar (Liaison with National Section).

Records & Editorial Committee: P.A.D. Hollom, M.J. Helps, A.R. Kitson, R.F. Porter, J.E. Squire, A. Vittery, I.R. Willis.

Summer Migrants in South West Turkey

During the International Wildfowl Counts in January 1969, M.J. Helps, A.R. Kitson and R.F. Porter spent several days at the delta of the Buyuk Menderes river on the South-West coast.

The road from Soke, the nearest town, along the Northern edge of the delta, is one that at times becomes impassable to vehicles other than tractors and Land Rovers. Heavy rain storms are frequent and the road quickly floods, the surrounding land being already under several feet of water. The road eventually leads to the small village of Doganbey and the ruins at Karine, both sited in the foothills of the bordering mountains that slope down to the sea. The height gained enables one to see well across the whole delta and grasp the vast extent of the flooded cotton fields, now devoid of activity except for the occasional party of hunters, small fishing boats and, of course, the ducks. The number of wildfowl in mid January was well over 120,000. A spectacular sight.

At the river mouth large lagoons are formed in the sea by natural sand banks. It was to the North of these lagoons in the small pines and scrub at Karine that numerous migrants, normally associated with warm summer days, were found.

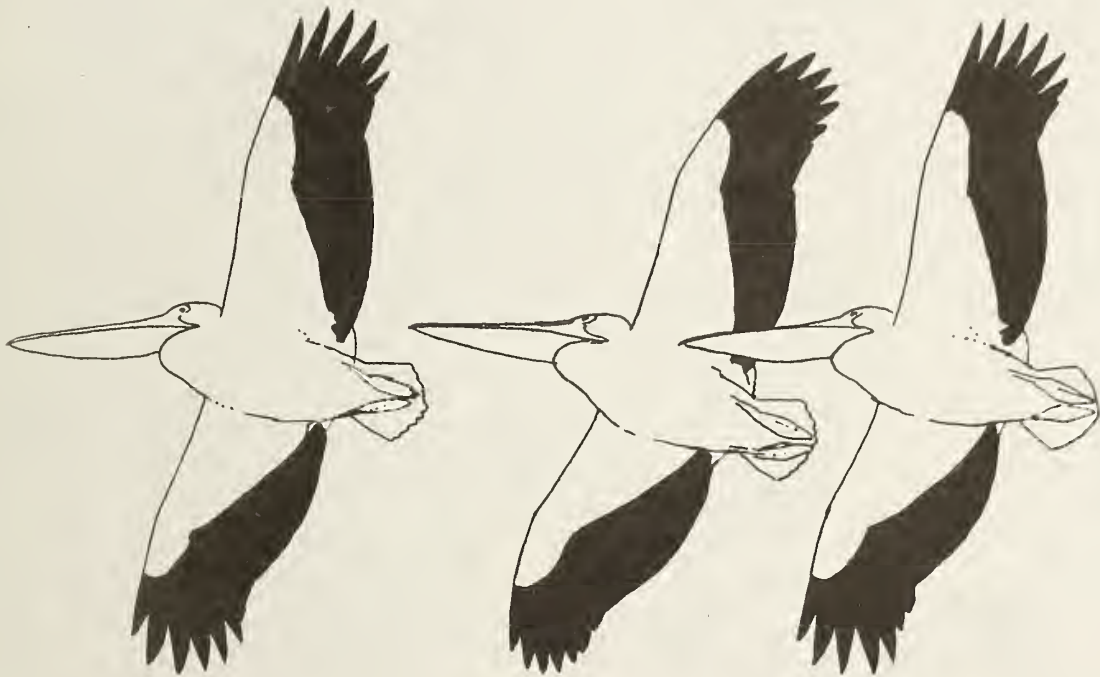
Most abundant of all was the Chiffchaff (*Phylloscopus collybita*), which kept to the upper canopy of the small pines. With the Chiffchaffs, 3 Yellow-browed Warblers (*P. inornatus*) were found. Had we more time in the area we felt sure others would have been located but we must remain in doubt whether the record was a freak occurrence or if it constitutes a new wintering ground - 3,000 kilometres west of its known wintering range.

Blackcaps (*Sylvia atricapilla*) were very numerous in the low scrub, together with small numbers of Firecrests (*Regulus ignicapillus*). Singles of Olivaceous Warbler (*Hippolais pallida*), Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*) and Willow Warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*) were observed. Cetti's Warbler (*Cettia cetti*) and Fan-tailed Warbler (*Cisticola juncidis*) were very numerous.

Among the chats, the Black Redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) was by far the commonest, and well over 100 were estimated to be present around the delta. Other chats were seen in small numbers but probably the most surprising records were of 3 Finsch's Chats (*Oenanthe finschii*) and a single Mourning Wheatear (*Oenanthe lugens*). Non passerines seen included Caspian Terns (*Hydroprogne tschegrava*), Sandwich Terns (*Sterna sandvicensis*) and Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*).

It seems fairly obvious that it was the mild weather conditions that S.W. Turkey enjoys that encouraged these birds to winter, when theoretically they should have been well

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to the South or even East. But whether or not it is a normal occurrence to find such large numbers of summer visitors in January can only be discovered by further observations in future winters.



Winter Wildfowl Counts

Wildfowl Counts have been carried out for the last three winters, and have produced some interesting results, which will in due course be written up in one of the annual reports. A picture is beginning to emerge, but it is by no means clear and coherent.

It is important to appreciate the difficulties. Turkey in January is a tough place, often deep in snow and ice, or alternatively mud. It is therefore not easy to travel about, and many of the marshlands are particularly hard to reach. In addition, they cover extremely large areas.

The distribution of wildfowl around Turkey is very much governed by the weather, particularly as there is a wide range of climatic conditions within the country itself. In addition, weather conditions outside Turkey, such as on the Danube, also seem to exert a powerful effect.

At this stage it would be misleading to quote numbers out of context, but without a doubt Turkey is one of the most important places for wintering wildfowl. The Meric river holds very large numbers of duck, as does the Menderes delta south of Izmir. The Ceyhan and Seyhan deltas near Adana are probably the most important wintering areas in the country for ducks, particularly in cold weather conditions, and there are many other lakes, marshes and rivers which hold large numbers of ducks at various times. For wild geese the Salt Lake area south of Ankara is important, particularly early in the season when large numbers of Whitefronts feed on the stubbles, which surround the lake.

Counting under these conditions poses a large number of problems, and improved

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techniques are certainly needed. Aerial surveys would undoubtedly help, but it will be some time before these become possible. At the present time we desperately need more observers, preferably able to provide their own transport, ideally a Land Rover or jeep. The date for next year's census has not been definitely fixed, and there is a possibility that it may be moved from January to November, which would make communications much easier. If anyone would be interested in taking part, he should write to W.H.N. Wilkinson, Ornithological Society for Turkey (Foreign Section), c/o The R.S.P.B., The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire.

Maps of Turkey.

M.J. Helps has prepared a number of large maps of Turkey specifically designed for ornithologists visiting the country. The maps are divided into the seven regions that have been devised for recording purposes. Anyone wishing to obtain a copy should write to the Secretary.

Illustrations.

Although the contents of this Bulletin reflect the winter scene in Turkey, the line drawings by Ian Willis depict three of the more typical birds of summer.



Page 1. Bee eater (Merops apiaster)

A common and widespread summer visitor, nesting in sandy banks and even roadside cuttings, only metres from the passing traffic.

Page 3. White Pelicans (Pelecanus onocrotalus).

Common on migration, particularly in Western Turkey, where flocks of up to 3,000 can be seen on spring and autumn migration on the Marmara lakes.

Page 4. Penduline Tit (Remiz pendulinus)

A widespread and common species in wetland localities, especially in Western Turkey. The hanging nest is normally suspended from a Willow branch.